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Cable Break Stalls Lifting Of H-Bomb

PALOMARES, Spain, March 25—U.S. Navy efforts to recover the missing H-bomb from the Mediterranean were delayed today when a steel cable wrapped around the bomb snapped as it was being lifted.

But official sources remained optimistic that the bomb might be recovered within 48 hours. Today's accident, they said, did not send the bomb further down the 70-degree slope on which it rests. "Instead, the bomb moved several feet back up the submerged hill when the tension went off the dragline," one source said, and it is now in a better position for the next recovery effort.

Adm. William S. Guest, chief of the recovery team, released a statement through the U.S. Embassy in Madrid that listed three hindrances to the work: periodic adverse weather conditions, the limited endurance of the submarines used and the need to recharge their batteries, and the roughness of the sea bottom on which the bomb rests.

A torpedo-recovery device called a CURV (controlled unmanned recovery vehicle) has been flown from California and is being assembled on Palomares Beach in case it is needed—but will not be ready before Tuesday. The CURV, being unmanned, can go down to great depths and stay for long periods of time.